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Americanism in War and in Peace

By

FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS, LL. D.

Professor of Sociology and History of Civilization
Columbia University

*Being the First Lecture on
the Carroll Davidson Wright
Memorial Lectureship*



Delivered at
CLARK COLLEGE
May 1, 1917

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CARROLL DAVIDSON WRIGHT
1840—1909

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INTRODUCTION

FORTUNE was kind to Clark College at its inception. It began without hampering obligations; it began under the shadow of a University of the highest standards and of assured reputation; and it had as its educational architect a distinguished man from outside college circles. Academic traditions are beautiful and they have their uses; but their beauty is that of age and their uses are those of ballast rather than those of sails. What a new institution most needs is freshness of vision—difference, not conformity. It must mutate, not run true to type; and the greatest stimulus to mutation is the leadership of an able and broadminded man trained in the handling of large but non-academic affairs. Such a man Clark College had in Colonel Wright, and as a consequence it has had the satisfaction of seeing its innovations, as time has passed, in process of adoption by its elder sisters.

It is true that during the first years of the College Colonel Wright's work as United States Commissioner of Labor kept him for long periods away from Worcester, and that like an experienced executive he delegated details of organization and administration to others; but it was his general plans that were put into execution and his ideals that determined the main lines of the new college. For this pioneer work he had not only a peculiar fitness but also a particular liking. The opportunity to make a new college upon a new model appealed to him; for the routine management of a going institution he cared little.

But beside freshness of view and an untrammelled initiative Colonel Wright brought a personality of great and varied attractiveness. Through the college president shone always something of the soldier, something of the economist, something of the com-

missioner. Like Frederick Dennison Maurice he stood for valor and charity but also for science at grips with modern problems.

Young men are all potential hero worshipers. It was inevitable therefore that the young men who were in college during his presidency should attach themselves to him with an ardent affection and that the young professors of the early faculty should feel the spell of his personality. It was inevitable also that his friends inside and outside the institution should desire to create some lasting memorial in his honor.

From this desire has resulted the Lectureship which tonight has its public beginning. Through several years contributions have been received, partly from the alumni—all young men just out of college, who gave sums relatively large in proportion to their means—partly from colleagues and from members of the Board of Trustees, who assisted generously, and partly from friends not connected with the institution—in all a sum of between \$5,000 and \$6,000, which was formally turned over to the Treasurer of the Board on last Commencement Day. The total is not large—it is the hope of the Board of Trustees and the originators of the plan that it may yet be largely increased by friends of President Wright and of the College—but I believe there has rarely been a memorial fund collected which has carried such a warmth of genuine and affectionate regard.

It is the purpose of the Fund to provide from time to time a lecture by a man of high distinction in the lines in which President Wright was himself distinguished and thus to keep alive as long as the College itself shall endure the memory of the man who organized it and of his larger scientific work. For the first Carroll D. Wright Lecture we have such a man in Professor Franklin H. Giddings of Columbia University, who was himself in some sense one of Colonel Wright's important sociological discoveries.

EDMUND C. SANFORD

Americanism in War and in Peace

BY FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS, LL. D.

*Professor of Sociology and the History of Civilization
in Columbia University*

Among ways of honoring the memory of men who have deserved well of mankind the lectureship appropriately commemorates intellectual usefulness. Mausoleum and monument, lifeless and unchanging, befit the deadness of dead kings. Their race is run; their power will soon have passed. But for the princes of science and of scholarship, for the investigators, the discoverers, the organizers of knowledge, the enlighteners, memorials that do not carry on the princely work are not adequate. It is in the nature of the facts, and therefore not a thing for surprise, that in the intellectual history of western civilization memorial lectureships have been stimulative and quickening. They have turned the attention of men toward the future, prophetically, rather than backward retrospectively. ✓

To those of us whose privilege it was to know Carroll Davidson Wright in the years of his restless activity it is deeply gratifying that a lectureship bearing his name has been founded at Clark College. Soldier, student, legislator, thinker, teacher and administrator, he represented our best Americanism in war and in peace. From his native state of New Hampshire he enlisted for the Civil War as a private and rose to the rank of Colonel of his regiment. He entered the service of his adopted commonwealth as a member of the Massachusetts State Senate. Observing the development of our economic and social life and the multiplication of new problems, he appraised the importance of trustworthy information,

and, as chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, and subsequently as United States Commissioner of Labor, he brought the collection and presentation of wage and employment statistics to the rank of an accepted and increasingly important function of both local and national government. He directed the completion of the Eleventh National Census. He lectured, taught and wrote; and as the honored president of Clark College he gave to the cause of education the later years of a life rich in experience and ripe in wisdom. His mind, always inquiring, was also creative, and it was of the ranging, forward-looking order. Could he have known that his name would be perpetuated and his work continued through this lectureship he would have enjoined upon each lecturer the duty of viewing and presenting the great problems of our collective struggle for achievement in the apostolic spirit, forgetting those things that are behind and pressing on to those that lie before.

Deeply sensible of my obligation to heed such admonition and to fulfil such obligation so far as I can, I ask you to consider with me the vital things of Americanism in war and in peace.

There have been many attempts to define Americanism and all of them have disappointed. Nations are individualities, and each is infinitely complex. The novelist by a happy phrase, or the caricaturist, by a pencil stroke, may identify a character so that we recognize it; but identification is not description. It is easy to single out various marks of Americanism, but none of them is Americanism itself, and all of them in combination are no more than a symbol of the elusive reality.

Our old world critics of an earlier day were fond of identifying Americanism with frontierism, and not infrequently their characterizations of American peculiarity have been repeated by Americans, impatient to see the flowering of an experimental civilization before the fulness of time. Our individualism, they

have said, has been narrowly self-sufficient. Not only self-reliant, we have almost been self-satisfied. Having accepted geographical isolation and adapted ourselves to it, we have in the end congratulated ourselves upon detachment from old world affairs, distrusting not only European politics, but also the historical experience of mankind.

It would be foolish to deny the truth in this characterization, for true in a measure it is. We have been a frontier people, and we are not yet a full generation away from the immediate reaction of frontier conditions upon life and thought. The fact explains, in part, a certain naive radicalism and a certain stubborn unteachableness from which we suffer in reputation and estate. Since we have dispensed with hereditary rank, why (it has been argued) should we not get on without traditional formalities, ceremonial manners, and even the minor social amenities? We have invented mechanisms, why should any one object if we invent also locutions and religions? We have created institutions, why should we not create character, by statutory enactment? It must be admitted, some of us proclaim, that we love extremes, and that in many things besides control of the liquor traffic we oscillate between license and prohibition. The way of temperance we find hard, and moderation we distrust, which means, of course, that we distrust ourselves. Therefore, it is not strange, we are told, that legislative intemperance is our besetting sin.

The foregoing characterization not only ventures to depict Americanism with the caricaturist's assurance, but presumes also to account for it. It is an explanation of our behavior in terms of environment and circumstance which, acting together, provide both the conditions to which we must adapt the collective organism, and the stimulation to which as a people we react. Another characterization there is which also presumes to explain no less than to portray, and this one proceeds upon the assumption that our ways are best accounted for in terms of original nature and

its predetermining of all our behavior reactions to stimulation.

This characterization also is in a degree a caricature. It identifies Americanism with hybridism. Some would use the harsher word "mongrelism." As a population we are a mixture of all white nationalities and of all color races. Pure strains among us tend to breed out. Not only assimilation, a mental process, but also amalgamation, a biological crossing, goes on relentlessly. Panmixia does its appointed work. We become a common breed, and what is worse, a breed without definite tendency, or, as the statistician would say, modality; or, to put it in a commoner phrase, without physiological quality. Therefore (so runs the implicated argument) we are and must expect to be without psychological distinction. Our original nature consists not of the selected instincts of a superior race, but rather of random instincts brought together from all races, most of them inferior to the English and Huguenot stocks that planted the Virginia and New England colonies. These ordinary instincts generate and condition our middle class tastes and admirations, our commonplace ideas. We distrust the highbrow; we love the average. We permit any citizen, native or imported, to legislate or to administer.

Like the identification of Americanism with frontierism, the identification of it with mongrelism is not wholly untrue, but the truth it contains is not only distorted and bizarre, it is also perilously misleading. Presumably it is not good biology. Our Mendelian biologists assure us that hybrids produced by the crossing of stocks that are not too widely unlike may be, in fact often are, at once more stable, more fertile and more variable than either of the relatively pure stocks that were crossed. The new breed may be staunch and enduring and at the same time it may produce individuals of exceptional individuality, and therefore of distinction, good or bad, as may happen. If this is scientific truth we have little ground for apprehension. Composite though our population is its

numerically preponderant stocks are those breeds of northwestern Europe which, in an earlier blending produced that stalwart English brood that has given to the world, discoverers, inventors, statesmen and philosophers of superlative genius, and which is rendering glorious account of itself today on the desolated fields of France and Flanders.

A fundamental truth of real value in these distorted characterizations of Americanism is the assumption made in both of them that a valid notion of Americanism must be stated in terms of behavior. To this extent they are good psychology. Through the life-long efforts of the distinguished president of this university, of his contemporaries, many of them Americans, and of brilliant younger men whom they inspired and trained, the psychology acceptable to the scientific world today is an account not of postulated faculties or of hypothetical motives, but of behavioristic phenomena, objective, observable, measurable, and comparable. Let us, then, not in the spirit of the sketch artist or of the journalist, but more soberly in the spirit of the psychologist and of the sociologist (who is but the psychologist specializing in the study of behavior in its pluralistic or collective aspect) examine somewhat more carefully the significant and substantial Americanism which consists essentially in the normal behavior of a mighty people in both the crises of war and the relatively stable circumstances of peace.

Crises challenge instincts and interrupt the flow of habit. Making useless the wonted operation of old mechanisms, they force organism and superorganism alike to resort to the makeshifts of trial and error. But out of controlled trial and error experimentation comes, and experimentation creates new mechanisms and gives us a greater command of power.

Of all crises war is the most disturbing, as it is the most appalling. Nothing else that breaks in upon the ordinary course of life scraps so many mechanisms, breaks down so many adaptations, interrupts so many

habits, or so radically re-conditions the instincts. Therefore nothing else that man encounters so imperiously drives him on to live or die by his higher wits; that is to say, by his reasoning processes. From this conclusion the psychologist and his variate, the sociologist, cannot escape, however abhorrent it may be to the moralist of pacifist proclivity. War does not merely admonish men to "forecast," to use the favorite word of Herbert Spencer's grandmother, it compels them to forecast. Remorselessly it gives them the option to take account of their resources and to recombine and to reapply them effectively, or to perish miserably. Its one laconic order is, "think or die."

But because individuals and groups of individuals differ one from another in original nature their reactions to crises, including war, also are different. Not only those that die because they cannot think, but also those that think and live experiment on varying lines and with many devices. And that which shunts the train of thought to one or another line is the something that we call character. The differentiation here is radical. There is no organism that can make use of any or all devices. There is no individual of the human race that can operate all mechanisms, each of which can be operated by somebody. And among civilized human beings there are individuals and nations that *will* not employ all of the means that have been thought of, or that might be thought of, for the achievement of ends. In his awakening Belfast address John Tyndall said that Christianity varies with the natures on which it falls. War, also, varies with the natures on which it falls, and, so varying, war has revealed one of the essential and abiding qualities of Americanism.

The American enters upon war only to resist intolerable conduct or conditions, and having entered upon it he wages war for victory and for nothing else. This remark may sound like a vainglorious generalization, but let us take it literally and see what, literally, it means.

There have been nations that have loved war for the excitement of it. Their motor impulses have naturally gone forth in conflict. They have proudly described themselves as warlike. In the fury of war they have revelled in brutality and destruction. The Assyrians, by all accounts, were such a nation. The Romans described the Germans of their day as such a people. The Americans, not in words only, but more convincingly by their policies, that is to say, by their behavior, have exhibited themselves as a people not warlike. Throughout most of the years of their national existence they have neglected military training, maintained the smallest possible military establishment, met emergencies, in the first instance, with undisciplined volunteers, and have only now and then brought their naval force up to a reasonable standard of efficiency. Even the militia, while theoretically constituted of all able-bodied men of military age, has in practice been a volunteer force inadequately trained. What further evidence is necessary to prove that this nation is not militaristic by propensity?

There have been nations and empires that have systematically waged wars of aggression for ulterior ends. They have sent forth conquering armies to annex territory or to levy tribute, or to broaden economic opportunity. Egypt, for a relatively short period in her long history, was an out-reaching militaristic power. Persia and Rome were conquering empires. The empire of Charlemagne, and France under the first Napoleon were empires in this sense of the word. The territorial possessions of the United States have been increased as an incidental consequence of war, but we have never undertaken a war with territorial expansion in view.

Of the five wars in which we have engaged one was for national independence, one was to maintain national integrity, one was to maintain what the nation believed to be its indisputable moral and political rights, and two were to abate nuisances. One generalization applies to them all. They were waged to force an

enemy to desist from a course which we declared intolerable. When this end was achieved they ceased. They were not punitive. In no instance was the foe subjected to unnecessary humiliation, and never was he made the object of senseless vengeance. In every instance, from the moment hostilities ceased, every effort was made to restore friendly relations. The bitterest conflict of them all, the Civil War, was followed by amnesty and the restoration of rights.

No other account can be given of our behavior thus far in entering the present world struggle. Once more we have taken a stand against intolerable conduct which has violated our rights, as it has invaded and violated the rights of the allied European nations; conduct which has threatened to destroy political liberty throughout the world, to crush the weaker peoples, and to subject civilized mankind to an arrogant dominion. There is no evidence of any wish or purpose on our part to wage this war further than may be necessary to compel the aggressor to desist from his insufferable behavior, and to put him under bonds to keep the peace from this time forth. There is abundant evidence that short of such achievement we shall not cease to put forth our full power, military and financial. As before, we shall fight for victory, and when victory crowns our effort and our sacrifice we shall return to the ways of peace.

What is implied in this attitude and in this conduct, regarded as a national behavior? Do we not find in it a clear implication that Americanism in war is a popular assertion that war is intolerable except as resistance against things intolerable, and is a determination not to permit indulgence in brutality, wanton destruction, or belligerency for its own sake, or resort to any means not undeniably necessary to accomplish the end in view? May we not, without self-deception, claim that Americanism in war demands that both the ends and the means shall justify themselves to the reason and the conscience of a self-restrained people?

If so high a claim may indeed be made, a moral consequence follows. War may brutalize, it does not necessarily brutalize. It may be a strengthening and purifying experience as almost certainly it is a clarifying experience. In peace our absorbing interest may be, too easily and too often it is, material profit. In war our absorbing interest is in life and death. But if life is to be of more value than material gain it must be the life of intelligence, of restraint and control, of creative achievement and expression. May we not truthfully say that Americanism in war is a willingness to face death courageously if thereby, and only if thereby, a life that is itself worthy can be safeguarded and perpetuated?

War focusses attention and concentrates effort. Peace disperses both. Therefore it is more difficult to characterize the behavior of a people under conditions of peace. It is necessary to neglect more of detail and to choose for consideration traits, qualities, activities or methods that are fundamental, essential, or approximately universal. In examining American behavior in time of peace we shall perhaps most hopefully look for essential or general marks if we inquire at once how Americans have undertaken to master their biggest practical problem. That problem has not been encountered in the merely material conquest of a continent. Individual initiative and spontaneous cooperation have cleared and plowed the land, opened mines, built cities and railways, and provided means of communication, all without much consciousness of perplexity. Nor has the great problem been encountered in our creation of the institutions of education and religion, of law and politics, although these have more severely taxed our intelligence and have afforded us many opportunities to experiment with new and often admirable devices. Our really formidable problem has been to create and to maintain a working cohesion of the highly miscellaneous elements of our population without imperiling our democratic system and destroying our liberties.

Popular self-government presupposes either essential like-mindedness or that intellectual approach which the Roman lawyers called a meeting of minds. Where there is no such meeting one of two alternative conditions necessarily exists. Either there is practical anarchism or there is practical despotism. Society may be only an aggregation of individualistic elements wherein every man does what is right in his own eyes and no collective achievement is possible, or the masterful will and the strong arm may intervene, and authority may combine heterogeneous forces in a mechanical but not ineffective order. It is plain that the United States is neither such a despotism as Mexico was under the rule of Diaz, or such an anarchy as Mexico has been since the power of Diaz was overthrown. And yet the United States is at once the most heterogeneous great people and the largest heterogeneous people in the world. By what magic or principle or method has it achieved collective efficiency and at the same time remained democratic and free?

A very small number of individuals may conceivably be alike and unanimous in many things. Their instincts may be those of one and the same small herd. They may be susceptible to the same suggestions and imitative of the same examples. Consciously they may feel themselves to be of one kind. They may follow one leadership. They may pledge themselves to one another to maintain a common cause. They may share common sentiments. They may obey a common authority. They may cherish common beliefs and ideals. But when the aggregation of individuals grows large, some of these items drop out of the common stock. Not all of those that share the same sentiments are now found subscribing to the same beliefs. Not all who obey a common authority proclaim the same ideals. In general, the larger and more miscellaneous a population is the fewer are the kinds or categories of moral and intellectual reaction that can be affirmed of all

individuals, or of individuals taken at random, indiscriminately. If, then, a large and heterogeneous aggregation does in fact cohere and collectively carry on great undertakings it is certain that in a few things, or in one thing, there is an exceedingly close similarity of all cooperating units, one to another, or that there is a nearly perfect unanimity.

Actually, any human group, small or large, is held together chiefly by some one mental activity to which other operations of the mind lend more or less support. There are bands of savages and there are hamlets of degenerates in civilized communities whose instincts are but meagerly helped out by acquisition and reflection. Their bond of unity is the herd mind. In normally advanced populations there are everywhere to be found companies or minor communities of kindred spirits that hold together in a clear consciousness of kind. Into all wider coherences organization enters, and different factors or principles of organization, one after another, play a leading part as the community enlarges, becomes composite, and develops complexity.

All organization begins in the more or less daring initiative of one individual, or a small cabal of individuals. The few react to a new situation or opportunity more promptly, energetically and efficiently than the many do, and thereby create a further situation, an internal situation, to which the many have to adapt themselves. The relation of leadership and following is created. This protocracy, this controlling power of the initially reacting group is the beginning of all "archies" and "ocracies" from monarchy to democracy, political or industrial, ecclesiastical or educational. It invents, constructs and operates all social organization.

From the moment that social organization arises and for a long time thereafter social cohesion is maintained by massing various ideas and sentiments that inhere in the consciousness of kind into a formidable support of the trusted leadership, of the accepted organizing power. Such is the ethnic spirit of the

tribe or the tribal confederation. Such was the simple but glowing patriotism of the Grecian City State. And perhaps our brief analysis helps us to see how different a thing true patriotism is from that herd instinct with which pacifist writers have ignobly presumed to identify it. Patriotism is a sentiment compounded of both intellectual and emotional factors, above all, of moral factors; for it is also a dedication. It asks not what is to be received from the community, but what is to be given to it, and at its best it gives all.

But between tribal confederation and city state there are transitional community forms, and new relationships of man to man arise. In the clash of tribal systems weak tribes are shattered and dispersed, while strong ones permit successful chieftains to attach to themselves a personal following, drawn from among the broken and ruined men of conquered clans. Here is the beginning of a feudal scheme of things—of *beneficium* and *commendatio*—wherein the weak accept protection from the strong, and in return become the strong man's men, giving him fealty and without question rendering whatsoever service he expects. Do not suppose that this scheme of things ceased to play its part in human affairs when the so-called feudal system broke down in Europe. It is a factor by no means negligible today in our politics and in our industry, even in our religious and educational organizations.

Neither the feudal scheme, however, nor the city state proved to be an adequate organization for great populations occupying wide-reaching territorial domains. Monarchy, which arose out of chieftainship, as feudal lordship did, or sometimes, later on through the intermediate step of lordship, demonstrated its superior power and flexibility. In a large measure competitive superiority seems to have been obtained through a daring elimination of non-essentials from the relation of sovereign and subject. Monarchy as such cares nothing for community solidarity as such. It cares nothing for patriotism. Rather it fears it

as bearing the seeds of democracy. Monarchy demands but one thing,—loyal obedience, obedient loyalty, submission to authority. Obviously within this one requirement vast numbers of human beings, accepting its one obligation, even though they be a highly miscellaneous multitude, may dwell together amicably and cooperate successfully under orders which make no impossible demand for spontaneous intellectual unity.

This all too brief account of the possibilities of social cohesion developing into political cohesion, on first inspection seems to make the question with which we started out more perplexing than ever. The American people first among great modern nations cast off monarchy, the one controlling power that had successfully organized nations and empires in distinction from mere towns or provinces. And then this nation took the second greatest risk that it is possible for a people to run, by opening its gates to the oppressed of every land, thereby introducing an ethnic confusion of which Babel was but a prophecy.

And yet we have held together, we have prospered, we have achieved. How?

The answer is very simple. It is also very wonderful. It is found in a certain fact of attainment, of understanding and of self-mastery, which, I think you will agree, is the highest manifestation of pluralistic behavior thus far in human history. For monarchy we have substituted, and successfully substituted, an abstraction. Instead of loyalty to a person or to a personal institution, if such an expression may be used, we have loyalty to a procedure, and by it we collectively live.

The procedure is this. We accept the decision of the majority, freely made in actual and lawful elections by a broadly democratic electorate. Through this acceptance we cohere and accomplish. We accept, however, and abide by the will of the majority upon a condition, which is that the minority, or the minorities, shall at all times be free to dissent intellectually,

to protest in speech, to agitate and persuade, to conduct campaigns openly, and endeavor in all peaceful and lawful ways to detach individuals from the majority and win them to the support of a minority in the hope that thereby the minority may presently become the majority. By insisting upon this condition and resolutely standing for all its legitimate implications we safeguard and keep our liberty.

Is this loyalty to a procedure (a mere abstraction in form but when viewed psychologically as behavior, a tremendous reality) perhaps the most essential and the most significant fact in our Americanism? On the whole I believe that it is. Other nations now are imitating this once astonishing political conduct. But it was Americans who first as a nation made the momentous experiment. It was Americans who first demonstrated that it could safely be made. Americans have made it on the greatest scale, and in the face of the most perplexing and perilous difficulty. It is Americans, therefore, that have been most deeply influenced and remorselessly molded by its reactions upon character. Under its steady pressure they have become confident and clear-minded. Their faith in democracy is no childish optimism. They know why they believe. They know that enlightened men can be entrusted with liberty, and that under liberty, without orders from above, they can in free cooperation attain the good life.

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